

2. PERSPECTIVE: Context, History, and Planning Heritage

OVERVIEW

This chapter provides information on the planning context, including Amherst's history, and the Town's planning heritage. This material is intended to provide perspective on the Town's past as it works to plan its future. In particular, the planning heritage section is intended to serve as a resource related to the policies and recommendations that have emerged over the years with regards to Amherst's physical built and natural environment.

Following this overview, the document is organized into the following sections:

- **Key Findings** – The key findings represent a summary of important conclusions drawn by the consulting team based on research and discussions with the CPC and Town Staff.
- **Detailed Information** – This section includes the background documentation for the key findings. It is divided into three parts:
 - Planning Context – Provides a basic overview of the Town's geographic location and its governmental structure.
 - Historical Context – Includes a general history of the Town of Amherst, a description of the evolution of its physical environment, as well as brief histories of Amherst College,

Hampshire College, and University of Massachusetts, three major institutions that helped to shape the Town.

- Planning Heritage – Provides a general overview of the history that led to the current master planning process and provides a general evaluation of a large number of Town plans and studies, and a summary table of the documents most pertinent to Planning Amherst Together.

A variety of sources were used in the preparation of this document. The Town's own plans and studies informed the majority of this chapter, while some internet research was conducted to gather information on the history of the Town and the universities.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The plans and studies reviewed represent an impressive body of work. The vast majority was developed by Town committees with the support of consultants, Town staff, and/or University resources. While these committees seemed to operate successfully to prepare the documents, their ability to impact adoption and/or implementation is unclear.
2. Consensus building and public participation are clearly strong values in Amherst. Most plans and studies included significant opportunities for public input and feedback.
3. Out of 27 plans and studies reviewed for this document, only two have been formally adopted. Lack of adoption has not precluded portions of plans from being implemented. However, this dynamic does suggest that despite considerable efforts at consensus building: (1) prepared plans do not enjoy the level of community support necessary for adoption, (2) there has not been the political will to adopt plans, and/or (3) the implementation of plans may be compromised by lack of formal adoption.
4. The presence of three major higher educational institutions has had a profound impact in shaping the physical and cultural character of Amherst. The majority of plans and studies acknowledge the importance of these institutions, but there seem to be few concrete recommendations specifically targeted to the institutions or related to addressing town/gown relationships.
5. Numerous plans and studies identify the need for changes in the regulatory environment – such as zoning bylaw changes or overlay districts – to achieve stated goals and objectives.
6. The regional context and regional connections are recognized in some of the plans and studies, but there appear to be few concrete recommendations about how to deal with these relationships. This may reflect Amherst's lack of power to influence what happens beyond its own borders, and/or the region's lack of formal and informal mechanisms for addressing regional issues.

7. The plans and studies also suggest that there has historically been and likely continues to be serious concerns about the nature of growth and development in the Amherst community.

DETAILED INFORMATION

Planning Context

Geographic Location

The Town of Amherst is located within Hampshire County, in the Springfield metro area. It is located in the Connecticut River valley. The total land area of the Town is 17,765 acres or approximately 27.8 square miles. Amherst is bounded by South Hadley and Granby to the south; Hadley to the west; Sunderland and Leverett to the north; and Shutesbury, Pelham, and Belchertown to the west.

Map 2.1 on the following page depicts Amherst's geographic location in the region. Amherst is one of 43 cities and towns located in the Hampden and Hampshire county areas that are members of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). Since 1962, the PVPC has been the designated regional planning body for the Pioneer Valley region.

Town Government

Amherst is among the relatively few towns of its size in Massachusetts that maintain a Representative Town Meeting (legislative) and Select Board (executive) form of government. Registered voters of the Town elect its legislature (a 254-member Representative Town Meeting) and its chief executive officer (a 5-member Select Board), as well as a 5-member School Committee, a 6-member Board of Library Trustees, and the Moderator of Town Meeting, as well as other officials that are not, strictly speaking, part of Amherst Town Government. Map 2.2 shows Amherst's 14 precincts.

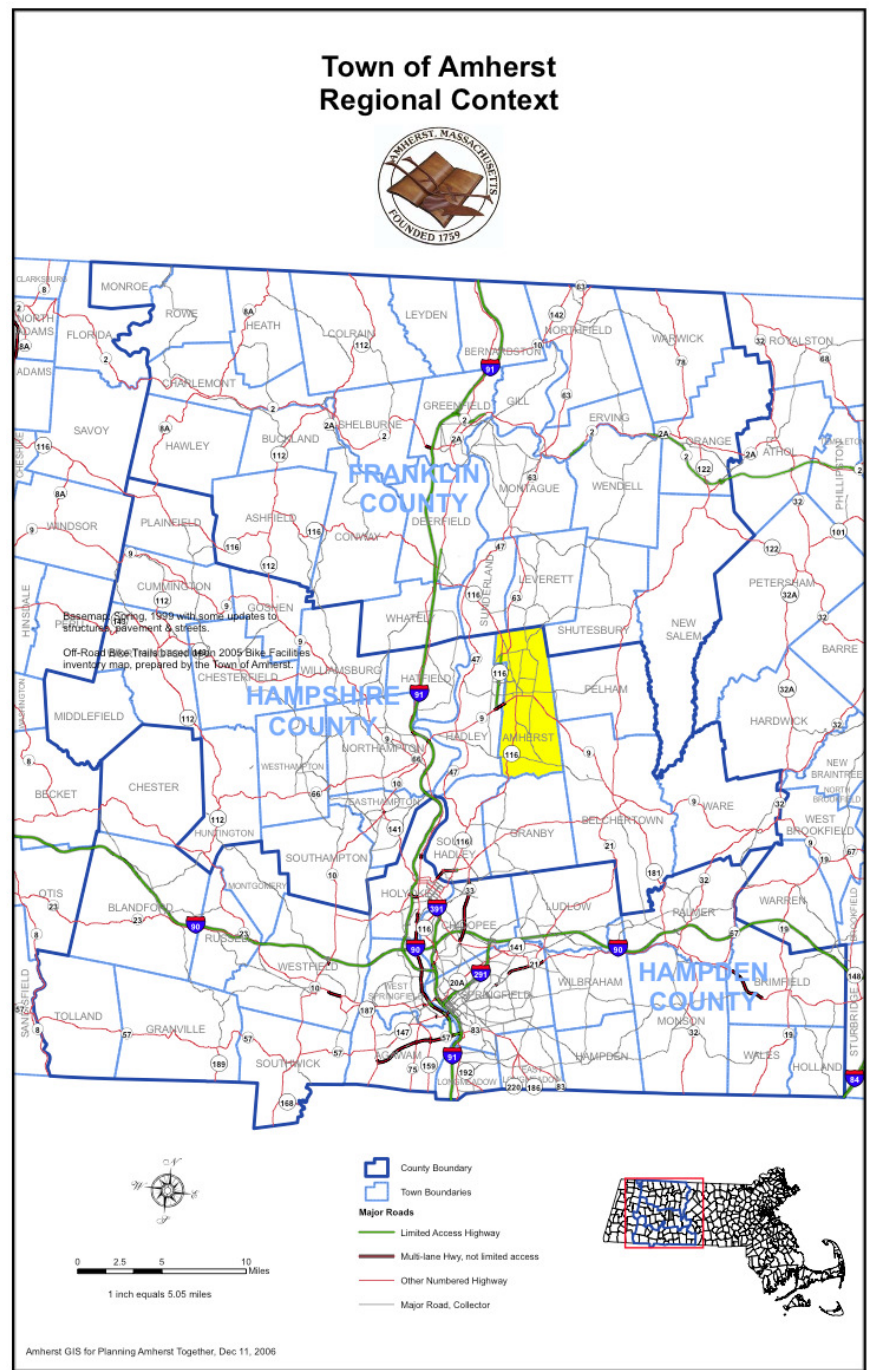
The Town's chief administrative officer is the Town Manager, who is appointed by the Select Board and is responsible for all Town departments, employees, and functions except the schools and libraries. A Superintendent of Schools is appointed by the School Committee, and a Library Director is appointed by the Library Trustees.

Town Government also includes more than 30 regulatory and advisory boards, committees, and commissions appointed by the Select Board and Town Manager, and a Finance Committee appointed by the Moderator to advise Town Meeting on financial matters. A list of these bodies is included in the sidebar on the following page. For more information on the charge and membership of these bodies visit the Town's website (www.amherstma.gov/committees.asp).

Town Committees

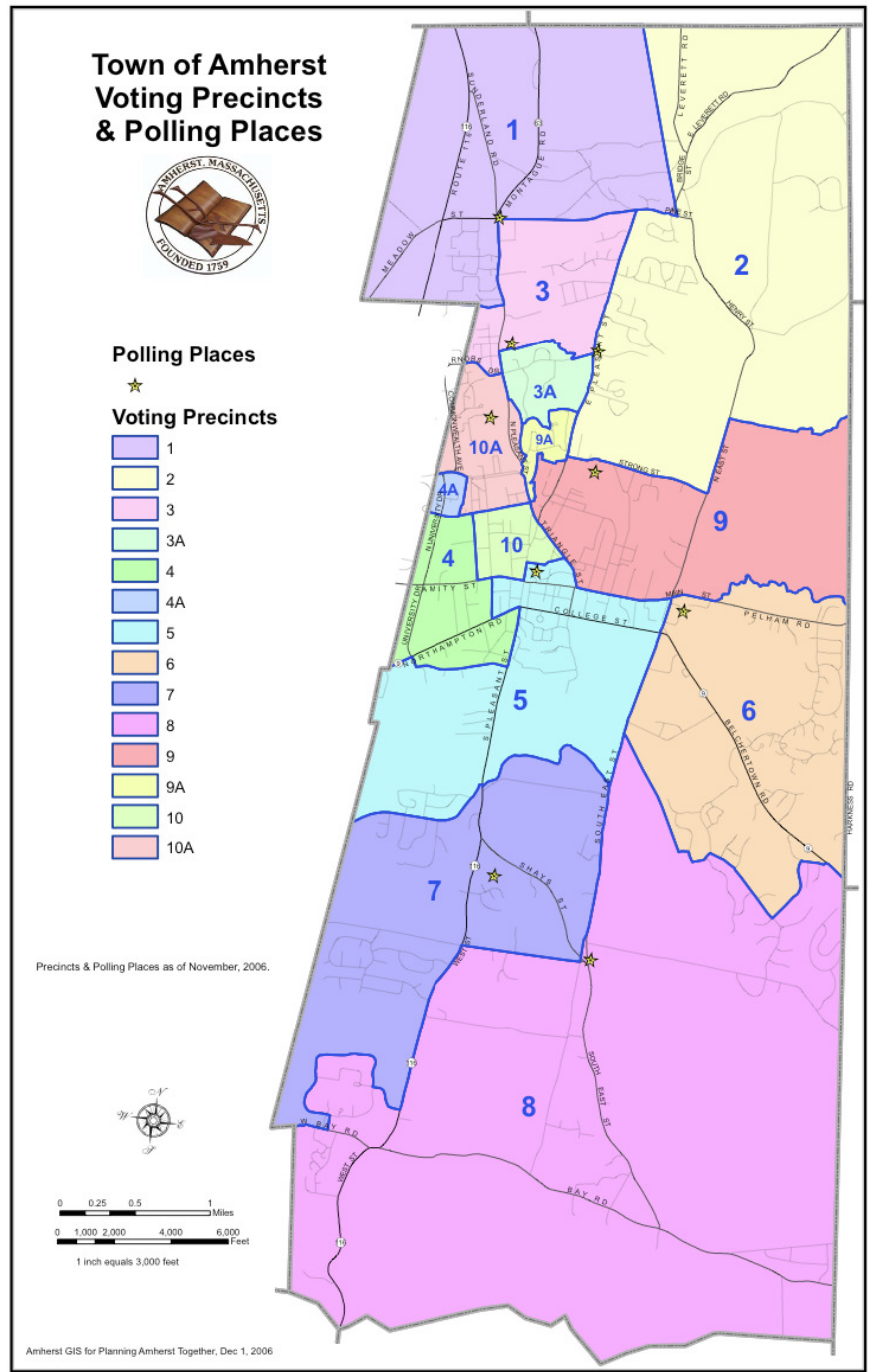
1. 250th Anniversary Celebration Committee
2. Aquifer Protection Committee
3. Board of Assessors
4. Board of Health
5. Cable Advisory Committee
6. Cherry Hill Advisory Committee
7. Community Preservation Act Committee (Bylaw)
8. Comprehensive Planning Committee
9. Conservation Commission
10. Council on Aging (Bylaw)
11. Council on Youth
12. Cultural Council
13. Design Review Board
14. Disability Access Advisory Committee
15. Emergency Homeless Task Force
16. Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (currently not active)
17. Electricity Deregulation Study Committee
18. Farm Committee
19. Finance Committee
20. Fire Station Committee
21. Government Affairs Committee (currently not active)
22. Historical Commission
23. Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee
24. Human Rights Commission
25. Kanegasaki Sister City Committee
26. La Paz Centro, Nicaragua Sister City Committee
27. Leisure Services and Supplemental Education (LSSE)
28. Munson Memorial Building Trustees
29. Parking Commission (currently not active)
30. Personnel Board
31. Planning Board
32. Police Stops Committee
33. Public Art Commission
34. Public Works Committee
35. Public Transportation & Bicycle Committee
36. Regional Refuse District Board of Supervisors (Dormant)
37. Registrars of Voters
38. Solid Waste Committee
39. Town/Commercial Relations Committee
40. Zoning Board of Appeals

MAP 2.1: REGIONAL CONTEXT



Source: Town of Amherst

MAP 2.2: VOTING PRECINCTS



Source: Town of Amherst

Historical Context

History of the Town of Amherst

Amherst has a long and rich history, beginning as hunting ground for Native people and extending through three centuries of European settlement and American history. In the 18th century Amherst was a community of farms and small mills, in the 19th century a farming and industrial town with two small institutions of higher learning, and from the 20th century to the present day it has been an educational center. Amherst's history has helped to shape its landscapes, buildings, roadways, economy, and culture.

In a deed of purchase dated December 1658, John Pynchon of Springfield acquired the lands now comprising Amherst from three native inhabitants. The first permanent English settlements arrived in Hadley in 1659. The Town was settled by Massachusetts Bay colonists. At that time, Amherst and the surrounding area (including present-day South Hadley and Granby) belonged to the Town of Hadley. The Third (east) Division of Hadley (which would become Amherst) began to be settled in 1727. In 1759, Amherst was created as a separate district from Hadley. Amherst is named after General Jeffrey Amherst, a British military commander during the French and Indian War. In 1786, full township status was granted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Evolution of the Town's Built Environment

The following excerpt from the Amherst Preservation Plan (pages 2-3) provides an excellent description of how the Town's history has impacted its physical development:

"The Town of Amherst lies on approximately 28 square miles in the Connecticut Valley of western Massachusetts, surrounded by four distinct landforms. To the north and south respectively stand the Sugarloaf and Holyoke Ranges, and to the east, the Pelham Hills. The Town of Hadley and Connecticut River stretch from Amherst to the west. The topography cradles the Town on three sides, but leaves it open to the vast Hadley floodplain. Within the town, the land rolls across grassy hills, farm and pasture lands, and forested wetland. Many fallow agricultural fields have succeeded to forest, resulting in large expanses of young woodlands.

"From its earliest days of European settlement, Amherst took the form of a town with several villages, separated by open farms and forests, and this pattern has endured. The largest village – Downtown Amherst – lies at the center of the town, and smaller clusters stand to the east (East Village), south (South Amherst), north (North Amherst and Cushman Villages), and west (West End). Downtown holds the greatest concentration of commercial activity, with smaller centers in some of the villages. "Strip" development has grown up along Routes 9 (College Avenue and Northampton Streets), and 116 (in North Amherst and at the intersection with Pomeroy Lane). Amherst has attempted to

Notable residents

Noah Webster, lexicographer
Emily Dickinson, poet
Robert Frost, poet
Helen Hunt Jackson, author
Osmyn Baker, United States
Congressman and lawyer
Augusten Burroughs, author
William S. Clark, principal founder of the
Massachusetts Agricultural College
Mason Cook Darling, United States
Congressman
Edward Dickinson, lawyer, United
States Congressman
Dinosaur Jr., rock trio
Robert Francis, poet
Norton Juster, author
Michael Lesy, author

Historic sites and museums

Emily Dickinson Homestead
Strong House Museum
Pratt Museum of Natural History
Mead Art Museum
Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
Amherst History Museum

Colleges and universities

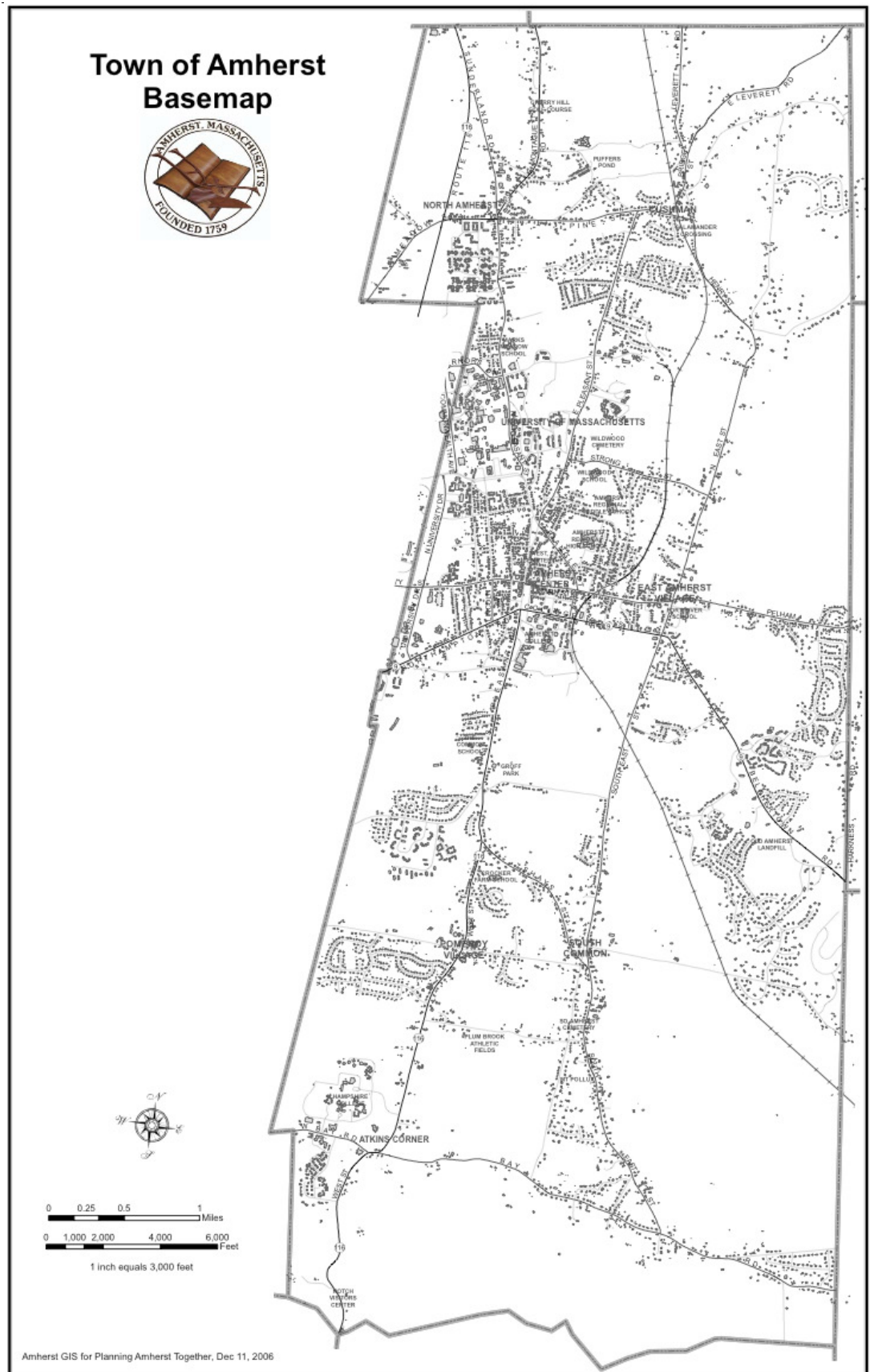
Amherst College
Hampshire College
University of Massachusetts Amherst

retain North Pleasant Street in Amherst Center. The downtown, along with several outlying village clusters, helps to define its historic pattern by clustering new housing in and around the villages and preserving much of the farmland and conservation lands that lie between them.

“Educational institutions now dominate the Amherst landscape, covering 18% of the town’s acreage. The University of Massachusetts, Amherst College, and Hampshire College extend from the northern end of the Town (UMass.), through the center (Amherst College), and reach the southern edge (Hampshire College). The town’s economy revolves around these institutions as does a significant portion of its housing. In the past 20 years, Amherst has also become a magnet for retirees, and residential compounds and medical facilities have emerged as a result. Since 1950, the Town has more than tripled in population (11,000 to 35,000) as well as density (400 persons per square mile to 1,260), causing a significant growth in housing and need for public services.”

Map 2.3, Town of Amherst Base Map, depicts Amherst’s current pattern of development (see following page.)

MAP 2.3: BASE MAP



Source: Town of Amherst

Amherst's Institutions of Higher Education

Amherst is home to the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst College, and Hampshire College, three of the five institutions in the Five Colleges educational consortium. These institutions have had a profound impact on the physical and cultural development of the Town.

Amherst College was founded in 1821, when a broad group of local people in and around Amherst worked together to create an institution of higher learning for the education of young men for the Christian ministry. Today the college includes a diverse international student body and has an enrollment of about 1,600 students.

The Massachusetts Agricultural School, which would become the University of Massachusetts, was established in 1867 as a land-grant agricultural college set on 310 rural acres. The curriculum, facilities, and student body eventually outgrew the institution's original mission. In 1931, the Massachusetts Agriculture School became Massachusetts State College and then in 1947 it became the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

After World War II, the university experienced rapid growth with 4,000 students in 1954. Within a decade, undergraduate enrollment more than doubled to 10,500. Along with the growth in student enrollment was a growth in programs and facilities. Today, UMass Amherst, the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts system, sits on nearly 1,450-acres and has an enrollment of nearly 24,000 students.

In 1965, \$6 million was donated toward the founding of Hampshire College. Along with a matching grant, Hampshire College was able to purchase 800 acres of orchard and farmland in South Amherst and construction began. Hampshire admitted its first students in 1970. Today it enrolls approximately 1,400 students.

Planning Heritage

History of Planning Amherst Together

Amherst currently operates without a Master Plan. Town boards and committees collaborate regularly to guide the development of Amherst, but their collaboration is guided by rules, regulations, procedures, and ad-hoc efforts, and is not under the direction of an official, approved plan. The decision to pursue the formulation of a new Master Plan for Amherst has evolved over time.

In 1997, the Amherst Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) was formed to carry out a Visioning Process for the Town of Amherst resulting in the publication of Amherst Visions in June 1998. This document recommended proceeding with a comprehensive planning process to ensure that growth and development supported the Town's vision for the future. In preparation for requesting funds from Town Meeting for the Master Planning effort, the CPC conducted a number of activities including scenario planning exercises to support the notion that a Master Plan is vital to the Town's future development.

NOTE: The Town's master plan effort was underway when the legal case of ZUCKERMAN vs. TOWN OF HADLEY was decided in August 2004. The Hadley case provided a necessary imperative to begin the effort in earnest. The case states that "time limitations on development must be temporary and must be dependent on the completion and implementation of comprehensive planning studies." Based on the language of the Hadley decision, Town Counsel, staff, and Town Meeting strongly believed the phased growth bylaw was unconstitutional as it stood, so it was amended to temporarily cure that problem while the master plan was developed to take its place.

In the fall of 1999 Town Meeting denied the funding for the Master Plan, but in the spring of 2000 it approved a Build-out and Future Growth Analysis. This analysis resulted in the formulation of several Future Growth Scenarios, one of which included the concept of clustering growth in several village centers to preserve open space. Other activities were undertaken to further the comprehensive planning effort including studies on open space and viewshed protection; defining the village boundaries outlined by the Build-out and Future Growth Study; and the design of several village centers.

In the fall of 2005, Town Meeting approved funding for the Master Plan. A request for proposals was issued and a team of consultants led by ACP – Visioning and Planning, Ltd. was hired to assist with the process that is currently underway. The Master Plan is anticipated to be completed in September 2007.

Past Planning Efforts

Amherst has a strong heritage of planning. Table 2.1 on the following page provides a list of 27 planning documents prepared from 1969 to 2005. These plans and studies cover a variety of planning-related issues, including growth, economic development, affordable housing, sustainable development, and streetscape design, among others.

At the July 11, 2006 meeting of the CPC, ACP facilitated a discussion to evaluate these previous planning efforts and studies with regards to their policy and technical content, as well as their level of community ownership and adoption status. The table on the following page summarizes the results of the discussion.

This exercise yielded a couple of observations that may be useful in understanding the role existing plans and studies can play in the current Master Planning effort, and in informing how Planning Amherst Together is executed. First and foremost, it is important to note that although many of the plans were evaluated as having positive policy value (and may have been implemented in part or in whole), the Town has only formally adopted two of the plans. Adoption of a plan lends it legitimacy and creates a mandate or framework for implementation. The lack of formal adoption may mean that plans are being implemented in a piecemeal manner, if at all. Secondly, according to the evaluation with the CPC, many of the plans and studies do not enjoy broad ownership in the community. While most of the plans included some form of public input, they did not succeed in building sufficient ownership and support.

The review of Amherst's past planning efforts would be remiss not to mention the excellent Geographic Information System (GIS) tools that the Town has invested in and developed over the years. These tools have contributed greatly to the plans and studies evaluated in this section, as well as to the Town's management of planning and development activities, infrastructure maintenance, and various other initiatives.

Evaluation of Existing Plans and Studies

Listed below are the Town’s existing plans and studies. They were evaluated by the CPC based on four criteria: policy content, technical content, community ownership, and adoption status. The evaluation codes are as follows: “X” indicates low utility, “+” indicates positive value, and “++” indicates a high level of significance for current planning efforts. In some cases, specific elements of the documents are identified for their particular significance.

The documents bolded below are those that are considered most pertinent to Planning Amherst Together. They are summarized in the following section.

Table 2.1: Existing Plans and Studies

| Plan | Policy | Technical | Community Ownership | Adopted |
|--|--------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> by Charles Downe (1969) | X | X | X | |
| <i>Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals (SCOG) (1973)</i> | ++ | X | X | |
| <i>Amherst Local Growth Policy Statement, Growth Management Problems and Priorities</i> (1976) | X | + University Growth | X | |
| <i>Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) Plan</i> (1979) | X | X | X | |
| <i>Growth Management Analysis: A Focus on Residential Growth in Amherst</i> (1984) | X | X | X | |
| <i>Amherst Growth Management Report</i> (1986) | X | X | X | |
| <i>Amherst Farmland Preservation Plan</i> (1987) | + | + | + | |
| <i>Town Center Background Report</i> (October 1991, update of 1985 original) | + | + History | X | |
| <i>Downtown Action Plan</i> (1992) | + | X | + | |
| <i>Site inventory for Research/Office/Industrial Parks</i> (July 1993) | X | X | X | |
| <i>Central Business District Access Plan</i> (1994) | + | + | X | |
| <i>Town of Amherst Design Review Board Handbook</i> (1994, revision of 1983 original) | + | + | | |
| <i>Town Center Parking Report</i> (1996) | + | + History | X | |
| <i>A Greenway Network for Amherst: A Model for America</i> (September 5 – October 16, 1997, Student work) | X | + Inventory | X | |
| <i>Amherst Visions: An Interim Report</i> (1998) | + | X | X | |
| <i>Overall Economic Development Plan: Five Year Update</i> (1999) | + | X | X | |
| <i>West Cemetery Preservation Plan</i> (1999) | + | + | | |
| <i>Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual</i> (2001) | + | + | + | |
| <i>Atkins Corner Sustainable Development Master Plan – Action Steps for a Better Amherst</i> (November 2000 – February 2002) | ++ | ++ | ++ | |
| <i>Build-Out Analysis and Future Growth Study</i> (2002) | + | + / X | X | |
| <i>Affordable Housing Plan</i> (2003) (Update of the 1992 Fair Housing Plan) | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Amherst Open Space and Recreation Plan</i> (Draft: August 19, 2003, supercedes the 1995 draft), augmented by GIS maps produced during E. O. 418 Community Development Plan Project | + | + | X | |
| <i>Corridor Study: University Drive, State Route 9 to Amity Street (“University Drive Corridor Study”)</i> (December 2003) | X | + Natural Resources | X | |
| <i>Amherst Comprehensive Planning Study: Defining Village Boundaries and Open Space Preservation Strategies</i> (2004, Student work) | + | + North Amherst | X | |
| <i>Sewer Extension Master Plan</i> (2004) | X | + | X | |
| <i>Amherst Preservation Plan</i> (2005) | + | + | + | |
| <i>Climate Action Plan</i> | + | + | X | + |

Summary of Selected Existing Plans and Studies

Table 2.2 below provides a brief summary of Amherst’s most significant and pertinent plans and studies, as identified by the CPC. The documents are listed in chronological order, and the table provides information about the purpose, process, and key recommendations for each plan or study. Where possible, it also provides web links to the electronic copies of the documents.

These existing plans and studies can help to inform the formulation of the Master Plan. Planning Amherst Together can build upon what has already been accomplished. The process can balance new input with results of previous efforts. Where there is intersection between the community’s vision for the future and the policies in existing plans and studies, these documents can serve as a resource. However, it is also important to note that Planning Amherst Together is a new process to create a broad policy document for the future, and it is not required to subscribe to the policies or strategies of the existing plans.

The summaries provided here should not be considered exhaustive. It is a great challenge to summarize hundreds of pages, and Table 1.2 is simply meant to provide an overview of the most pertinent planning documents and help to direct readers to information sources related to specific topics. The complete documents are available from the Town. One key source for this table is the annotated outline of planning documents developed during “Planning the Plan.” ACP has also conducted a primary review of the documents.

Table 2.2: Summary of Selected Plans and Studies

| Title | Year | Purpose | Process | Summary of Recommendations |
|--|------|---|--|---|
| Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals (SCOG) | 1973 | To update 1969 Comprehensive Plan, and develop goals to shape future growth and development. | Process was led by a 25-person committee; a questionnaire was used to solicit public input. | Moderate growth, establishing villages and village centers, protecting open space, enhancing Town Center, providing housing for low income and elderly, among other issues. |
| Amherst Farmland Preservation Plan | 1987 | To protect and preserve prime agricultural land. | Initiated by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in conjunction with an advisory committee. Survey of local farmers, no major public input. | Agricultural Incentive Area, innovative agricultural zoning, purchase of development rights, policies about sewer and water extensions, land trust/fund, promote local farms and produce, among other issues. |
| Downtown Action Plan | 1992 | To identify opportunities and obstacles to the future of downtown and seek consensus on public and private actions. | Town Commercial Relations Committee and the Planning Board used previous studies and community forums and task forces to form the action plan over one year. | Actions should reflect downtown's role as the heart of Amherst and are broken into topics: Open Space and Streetscapes, Boltwood Walk, Parking, Roads and Transportation, Commerce and Culture, Regulation and Enforcement, and Public Buildings. |

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| Title | Year | Purpose | Process | Summary of Recommendations |
|---|------|---|---|--|
| Central Business District Access Plan | 1994 | To improve accessibility of the Central Business District for elders and persons with disabilities. | Consultants wrote the plan for the Amherst Planning Department using on-site surveys, field observations, and input from residents with accessibility concerns. | More accessible design and construction including removal of specific barriers and overall District recommendations, and a preliminary budget was included. |
| Town of Amherst Design Review Board Handbook, Revised | 1994 | To explain the Review Board process, preserve Town heritage, increase property values, and stimulate economic growth. | The Handbook and its revision were created by individuals working under the Review Board's supervision to set design principles and standards. | Preserve property values, promote beauty, encourage conservation of structures with aesthetic and historic significance, prevent incompatible alterations to existing environment, and encourage flexibility. |
| Amherst Visions: An Interim Report | 1998 | This was intended to be a first step in writing a master plan by clarifying issues and priorities that the plan must address. | The community was involved in visioning workshops that were designed to bring people together in an open process that solicited input from the community. | Build neighborhood identity and a village center, pursue physical and social linkages as basis for community, serve the underserved, realize limits in actions and policies, invest in infrastructure, take care of what Amherst has before developing anew, look for solutions in regional and eco-regional systems. The plan also highlights the concepts of environmental, economic, and educational values, and diversity, affordability, and enhanced Town character. |
| West Cemetery Preservation Plan | 1999 | To protect and restore the West Cemetery's historic resources, landscape, and function as a public open space and historic site. | The plan was prepared for the Historical Commission with funds from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management Historic Landscape Preservation Grant. | The Plan proposes design improvements for this key open space and cultural resource. |
| Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual | 2001 | To provide design guidelines for Streetscape projects in safety, accessibility, furnishings, and amenities to encourage increased pedestrian traffic. | The Berkshire Design Group prepared the manual for the Town Center Sidewalks Design and Accessibility Project, which was staffed by the Planning Department. | Consistent overall design for the Town Center, design for sidewalks and pedestrian paths, various treatments for various conditions including accessibility, furnishings, and plantings. |
| Atkins Corner Sustainable Development Master Plan – Action Plans for a Better Amherst | 2002 | To create guidelines for sustainable development practices throughout Amherst using Atkins Corner as the model. | Residents and representatives of the Planning Board and Department participated in two highly interactive planning and design workshops. Consensus was reached at a presentation of findings. | Guidelines in design concepts, uses and programming, climate-friendly design, plantings and landscape treatment, circulation, access and parking, traffic-calming and pedestrian safety, and storm water management. Also specific actions: create two “traditional village” zoning districts, establish a circulation system that encourages non-motor activity, require native vegetation and protective buffer strips, and require storm water treatment systems that maximize groundwater recharge and natural filtration. |

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| Title | Year | Purpose | Process | Summary of Recommendations |
|--|------|---|---|--|
| Build-Out Analysis and Future Growth Study | 2002 | To update and extend analysis regarding historic and projected development, and facilitate public participation to encourage input in the creation of future development. | The consultant team collected data and tuned the build-out model, with input from Amherst officials. A workshop was held for the community to learn about methodology, consider preliminary findings, and evaluate development scenarios. | Consensus gravitated away from a 'Current trends extended' scenario and toward lowered growth, strongly directed to three new village centers. The latter was considered the appropriate pattern for future development. |
| Affordable Housing Plan | 2003 | To update 1992's Fair Housing Plan and provide a basis for plans and actions that implement the Town's Fair Housing Policy. | Information on housing and residents was compiled and reviewed. The Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee then convened two joint public forums of Town boards, other groups engaged in housing-related efforts, and the community at large. | Actively support initiatives designed to preserve and replenish affordable housing inventory, actively promote access to housing for all persons, commit to educating the public on housing issues, and enforce housing laws and protections within the community. |
| Amherst Open Space and Recreation Plan, Draft | 2003 | To submit a five-year update to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation Services, and to have a revised plan for the CPC to use in the preparation of a Master Plan. | The Conservation Commission sponsored an Open Space Summit in 2001, a Leisure Services questionnaire was circulated in 2002, and public meetings were held in 2002 and 2003 to review the plan and a set of GIS maps were created. The Planning Board, Select Board, and Farm Committee reviewed the draft in 2003. | Protect and encourage productive farms and agricultural businesses, complete partial blocks of open space through restrictions or title, lessen the impact of new development by securing open space, improve the present trail system, protect wetlands, water supply sources, and scenic viewpoints, enhance outdoor recreation possibilities, manage Town land resources to maximize their value as natural and open space, establish small conservation areas in or near Town and village centers, make use of Community Preservation Act [CPA] funds to complement other goals. |
| Amherst Comprehensive Planning Study: Defining Village Boundaries and Open Space Preservation Strategies | 2004 | To maintain CPC's momentum by working on three topics related to the Master Plan: open space and viewshed protection; defining village boundaries; and the design of several Village Centers. | The study was conducted by graduate students in the department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning of UMass. The team reviewed written sources and interviewed Town Staff. Feedback from the CPC and Town Meeting were also cited as key inputs. | Proposes village boundaries, ways to create more vibrant, walkable village centers, and strategies for viewshed protection, woodland and street tree protection, cluster development, village center development, and design review guidelines. |
| Sewer Extension Master Plan | 2004 | To update and revise the recommendations included in the sewer master plan portion of the 1991 Wastewater Facilities Plan. | There appears to have been a homeowner questionnaire distributed as part of the study. (As an engineering plan, the document does not contain the acknowledgments and explanation of process usually found in planning documents.) | The plan recommends specific improvements to the collection system in the areas of Harkness Road, Southeast Street, Hulst Road, Wildflower Drive, Shays Street, Shays Street Dense Cluster, High Point, and Montague Road. The 2004 update does not include an evaluation of the wastewater treatment facilities. |

| Title | Year | Purpose | Process | Summary of Recommendations |
|---------------------------|-------------|---|--|---|
| Amherst Preservation Plan | 2005 | To ensure that the Town considers historic and cultural resource preservation in future planning and development efforts. The Plan identifies priorities for community preservation over a ten-year period. | The plan was for the Amherst Historical Commission. It is considered an excellent reference document for Amherst's historic resources, and a plan that has strong policy recommendations and enjoys community ownership. | The plan presents a 10-year plan of actions in physical preservation of historic buildings and resources, completing and improving public access, amending and improving Town bylaws, regulations, and permitting procedures to protect and enhance historic resources during the development process and increasing the community's knowledge of and access to its historic resources. The plan includes specific actions to pursue these recommendations. |
| Climate Action Plan | 2005 | To outline measures completed or proposed in order to achieve greenhouse gas reduction as part of the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. | The Energy Conservation Task Force developed the Climate Action Plan. | Strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for Amherst as a whole by 35% below 1997 levels by the year 2009 in the areas of Energy Use and Facilities, Transportation, Waste Management, Land Use and Planning, Community Education and Resources, and Implementation and Monitoring. |

Key Planning Topics and Related Sources

Outlined below are a number of the key planning topics that recur in the pertinent plans and studies, along with the related sources. The outline is divided into the following categories, which closely track the elements of a Master Plan:

- Land Use
- Housing and neighborhoods
- Economic development
- Natural and cultural resources
- Open space and recreation
- Town services and facilities
- Transportation and circulation

For each category, key themes related to the category are identified that have emerged in past planning efforts. For each of these emerging themes, planning documents that address those themes at a relatively detailed level are listed.

NOTE: This should not be viewed as an exhaustive list of all planning-related topics or as predetermination of issues the Planning Amherst Together Master Plan will ultimately address. It is a guide to assist citizens and staff in identifying past planning efforts they may want to reference during their work.

Land Use

Strengthen Town Center

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Downtown Action Plan
- Amherst Visions
- Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual

Establish/strengthen the "Village Center" concept

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Visions

- Atkins Corner Sustainable Development Master Plan
- Build-Out Analysis and Future Growth Study

Preserve Open Space

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Farmland Preservation Plan
- Amherst Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Amherst Comprehensive Planning Study

Preserve Historical Resources

- Downtown Action Plan
- Amherst Preservation Plan
- West Cemetery Preservation Plan
- Town of Amherst Design Review Board Handbook, Revised

Enhance Walkability

- Downtown Action Plan
- Central Business District Access Plan
- Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual
- Atkins Corner Sustainable Development Master Plan
- Amherst Comprehensive Planning Study

Increase density in selected areas

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Visions
- Atkins Corner Sustainable Development Master Plan
- Build-Out Analysis and Future Growth Study

Housing and Neighborhoods

Encourage compact development in village centers

- See village centers under Land Use above

Affordable Housing

- Affordable Housing Plan
- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Visions

Economic Development

Encourage economic activity in village centers

- See village centers under Land Use above

Design Standards

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals

Strengthen Downtown Economy

- Downtown Action Plan
- Amherst Visions

Foster New Businesses

- Downtown Action Plan
- Amherst Visions

Natural and Cultural Resources

Preserve Environmental Assets

- Amherst Visions
- Amherst Comprehensive Planning Study
- Amherst Open Space and Recreation Plan

Preserve Historic Resources

- West Cemetery Preservation Plan
- Amherst Preservation Plan
- Town of Amherst Design Review Board Handbook, Revised
- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Visions

Preserve Scenic and Agricultural Lands

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Farmland Preservation Plan
- Amherst Open Space and Recreation Plan

Support the Arts

- Amherst Visions

Open Space and Recreation

Preserve Open Space

- Amherst Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Amherst Comprehensive Planning Study
- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Visions
- Downtown Action Plan

Town Services and Facilities

Provide and Maintain Public Services

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Amherst Visions
- Sewer Extension Master Plan

Locate Public Services Within Village Centers

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals

Consistent Design in Town Center

- Town of Amherst Design Review Board Handbook, Revised
- Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual
- Central business district access plan

Use Public Utility/Service Extension as Tool to Manage Growth

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals

Restore/Preserve Historic Public Buildings

- Downtown Action Plan
- Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual

Make Specified Sewer Improvements

- Sewer Extension Master Plan

Transportation and Circulation

Transportation Alternatives

- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals
- Downtown Action Plan
- Amherst Visions

Design Solutions to Aid Disabled

- Central Business District Access Plan
- Final Report of the Select Committee on Goals